

2004

Salem County

Environmental Health Assessment

And

Improvement Plan

Prepared: September 2003

The Plan:

The Salem County Health Department (SCHD) is an established health department pursuant to the authority of NJSA 26:3A2-1 et seq. SCHD is the certified local health agency for the provision of environmental health services delegated by the County Environmental Health Act (CEHA) and the Environmental Health Standards of Administrative Procedure; NJAC 7:1H – 2.1 et seq.

Community Background:

Salem County is a sparsely populated rural community comprised of 15 municipalities. Its 64,285 residents reside in a 346.95 square mile area giving it a population density of approximately 185 people per square mile.

Salem County's location is on New Jersey's main transportation corridor with major roads (New Jersey Turnpike, I-295, Rt. 55 and connection to I-95 via the Delaware Memorial Bridge) connecting Salem County with Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. Industry is primarily located on the Delaware River and in the Salem City area. A number of firms in chemicals, electronics and energy, including PSEG Nuclear Generating Station, make Salem County their home.

Salem County is also one of the leading agricultural counties in the state, with predominately rural towns in its eastern and central sections.

Local Environmental Issues:

The majority of Salem County residents are in rural areas that utilize private wells for their drinking water. Private well drinking water quality as well as public non-community water system drinking water quality is a concern. Ongoing studies conducted by the NJDEP are showing the presence of several drinking water contaminants. Among these contaminants are mercury, gross alpha, 1,2,3 trichloropropane and 1,2 dichloropropane. Additionally, Private Well Testing Act results have shown that approximately 50% of wells tested failed for pH and/or iron, 25% failed for manganese, 8.5% for total coliform, 20% for lead and 8% for nitrates. The Salem County Board of Freeholders are in the process of passing an Ordinance that would require private drinking water wells to meet Safe Drinking Water Standards (on parameters tested) prior to receiving an occupancy permit.

Many of our stores, campgrounds, schools and other community businesses also provide drinking water from on-site wells. The Safe Drinking Water Program and Zero Tolerance Policies will continue to be a priority for Salem County Health Department in the 2004 Grant cycle.

Routine inspection of facilities with registered Under Ground Storage Tanks (USTs) will allow environmental officials to monitor tanks for leak protection requirements and leaking product that has the potential to contaminate drinking water.

Salem County's soils and water table contribute to a seemingly high number of septic system failures. SCHD has performed door-to-door sanitary surveys for septic system failures in a couple communities. It is evident from the data gathered that there is a severe problem with sewage disposal in some areas. To prevent further development in these areas, SCHD has a policy to witness all soil & site evaluations in an effort to verify site conditions prior to permits being issued.

As a leading agricultural community Salem County has several migrant labor camps. SCHD participates with the EPA and NJDEP in the migrant labor camp drinking water monitoring program. This program assures safe drinking water to the transient migrant community.

Salem County's location on a major transportation corridor creates an area that is frequently impacted by motor vehicle accidents requiring haz-mat response. SCHD has an agreement with SCOEM for response to hazardous materials incidents and has entered into a formal agreement with City of Vineland Haz-Mat Team. The CEHA haz-mat annex has been updated to reflect these changes.

The environmental response to recent bio-terrorism threats and incidents is a growing concern. While a majority of these calls center around public health, it is the environmental first responders that are on the front line. SCHD will continue working closely with the Salem County Prosecutor's Office, local law enforcement, Salem County OEM, and through a mutual aid agreement, the Cumberland County OEM to coordinate systems and responses.

Through a partnership with the Salem County Utilities Authority, the SCHD plans to promote and enforce recycling within the County in the 2004 grant cycle.

Strategic Goals and Activities:

Salem County's Environmental Assessment and Improvement Plan places local environmental concerns within the context of the Strategic Goals set forth by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Salem County Health Department will respond to these goals pursuant to the authority delegated to SCHD through the NJDEP and CEHA.

Goal: Clean Air

The air throughout the County will be healthful to breathe, and air pollutants will not damage our forests, land and water bodies.

Milestone: By 2007, air throughout the County will meet national Clean Air Act standards for ozone and other air pollutants.

Activities: Inspect minor and B source air permitted facilities to determine compliance with the State's air pollution control regulations. Emphasis

will be placed on gas stations that have not been inspected in 4 or more years

Conduct inspections at potential facilities that may require air permits as needed.

Conduct odor and emission complaint investigations received from citizens and NJDEP. Implement actions to have the source of the complaints corrected.

Deliverables: Submit all compliance monitoring inspection reports to NJDEP's Minor Source Compliance Investigation Program within 60 days of completing the inspection.

Notify NJDEP of enforcement actions and forward all enforcement records according to NJDEP protocols.

Resources: SCHD employs one REHS trained in facility inspections and one PHI trained in odor complaint and visual emissions investigations. No other local agencies perform this type of work and no inter-local service agreements for the air program are in place.

Vehicles are available to staff for travel to and from inspection sites. A computer with internet access is available for this program.

Goal: Clean and Plentiful Water

Salem County's rivers, lakes and coastal waters will be fishable, swimmable and support healthy ecosystems. Surface and groundwater will be clean sources of water. Every person will have safe drinking water. Adequate quantities of surface and ground water will be available for all uses.

Milestone: 95 percent of the public non-community water systems will provide water that meets chemical and microbiological drinking water standards.

Activities: Inspect non-transient PNC systems at least every two years and transient PNC systems at least every four years.

Continue to implement the NJDEP Zero Tolerance Policy for PNC systems found in violation. Periodically review the NJDEP public water database (PWS) to determine if any PNC systems have failed to sample as required. Undertake enforcement action to return violators to compliance. Provide correct updated information on PNC system status to NJDEP

If funded, continue to collect drinking water samples at migrant farm camp wells. Both pre and mid season samples will be collected and analyzed for bacteria, nitrate and chlorine residual. If exceedances in drinking water standards are identified, appropriate compliance and enforcement activities will be taken to assure a safe drinking water supply.

Deliverables: Submit all compliance monitoring inspection reports to NJDEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water.

Notify NJDEP of enforcement actions and forward all enforcement records according to NJDEP protocols including Notice of Violation/Offer of Settlement policies.

Report findings of migrant farm camp well samples to USEPA at the conclusion of the season.

Resources: One REHS is trained in facility inspections and zero tolerance policies. SCHD works closely with the local laboratories to receive up to date sampling results and assure timely sampling for registered facilities. Penalties are deposited into the SCHD EQEF. No inter-local service agreements are in place for this program.

A computer with an internal modem is provided for connection to the PWS. Vehicles are available for travel to and from inspection sites.

Milestone: Control pollution emitted to the waters of the State.

Investigate all water pollution complaints received by citizens and the NJDEP. Implement actions to have the source of the complaints corrected.

Maintain files and notify NJDEP of all enforcement actions taken.

Milestone: By 2005, 100 percent of New Jersey's recreational beaches will be safe for bathing.

Activities: Assure that recreational beach monitoring is performed. Perform pollution source investigations.

Each season compile, from all municipalities within the county, the list of recreational bathing areas on lakes or streams, bacteriological sampling results, and the number of beach closings due to water quality impairments.

Deliverables: At the end of the season, submit recreational beach water monitoring results electronically to the NJDEP.

Resources: SCHD employs a full time REHS trained to perform sanitary surveys of beaches.

A computer, with Microsoft Excel software and an internet connection is available for electronic submission of sample results.

Goal: Safe and Health Communities

Every Salem County Community will be free from unacceptable human health and ecological risks due to direct exposure from hazardous substances and other potentially harmful agents. Natural resources will be managed to protect the public from floods, fires and storms.

Milestone: Exposure to environmental risks will be controlled and minimized.

Site Remediation Program

Activities: Assure response to all hazardous materials emergencies referred by NJDEP to assess environmental health threats and advise hazardous materials response units accordingly. Make recommendations to and coordinate these response actions with appropriate federal, state and local agencies. Ensure that personnel assigned to respond to haz-mat incidents are properly trained and participating in a medical surveillance program.

Investigate hazardous materials complaints received from citizens and NJDEP. Refer cases requiring remedial action to NJDEP.

Participate in a pilot project to conduct comprehensive inspections of regulated underground storage tanks (USTs) to determine compliance status. Re-inspect regulated USTs every three years.

Deliverables: Work with Salem County Office of Emergency Management and prepare reports of all hazardous materials responses. Submit to NJDEP proof of meeting PEOSHA health and safety training requirements.

Follow NJDEP protocols and guidelines for UST inspections. Submit inspection reports as required to NJDEP.

Resources: SCHD maintains a shared service agreement with SCOEM for hazardous materials response and investigation. Salem County has also entered into a formal inter-local service agreement with the City of Vineland for Hazardous Materials Team response within Salem County.

A vehicle is supplied for response to incidents.

A computer with internet access is available for reviewing and submitting UST information.

OVA equipment will be on long term loan from the Department in order to complete UST inspections.

Solid Waste Program

Milestone: **To achieve and maintain the safe management of wastes in an environmentally sound manner.**

Activities: Continue to investigate all solid waste complaints received from citizens and NJDEP.

Conduct routine compliance monitoring inspections of Class A, B & C recycling facilities, convenience centers and farmland mulch sites. Continue to update the list of these sites and provide to NJDEP. As requested, conduct inspections of contaminated soil sites.

Continue to monitor solid waste haulers to ensure compliance with the Solid Waste Management Act, and conduct interviews of transporters referred by NJDEP.

Continue compliance monitoring inspection of all other delegated solid waste facilities.

Monitor storage of scrap tires in accordance with the Solid Waste Regulations. Take enforcement actions as required.

Deliverables: Enforce the State Solid Waste Management Act and initiate enforcement proceedings pursuant to NJDEP guidelines.

Submit 1/4ly, the list of solid waste facilities inspected.

Notify NJDEP of enforcement actions according to policy.

Resources: SCHD is hiring a full time REHS designated to the solid waste program. This investigator works closely with the Salem County Improvement Authority.

A vehicle is available for all field inspections.

Noise Control

Milestone: Control noise that unnecessarily degrades the quality of life and/or affects the health and safety of people in Salem County.

Activities: Investigate noise complaints received from citizens and the NJDEP that are under the jurisdiction of the Noise Control Regulations, and if applicable, enforce those regulations to achieve compliance. As requested by local officials and others provide guidance on noise regulations and noise prevention and abatement.

Deliverables: Maintain records of all complaint investigations.

Maintain current staff certifications for noise control programs.

Resources: SCHD employs a REHS who is certified in noise complaint investigation. SCHD maintains a quest sound meter to be used for noise complaint investigations.

A vehicle is available for response to complaints.

Goal: Open and Effective Government

The department will fulfill its vision and mission and achieve its goals through the involvement of citizens and stakeholders as critical partners and through the commitment to quality principles and methods as a means to continuous improvement of its operations.

Activities: Encourage and develop strategic partnerships with other local, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, environmental commissions, the general public and the business community to address environmental issues and concerns.

Provide education and outreach as well as environmental data to community groups.

Deliverables: SCHD will continue its relationship with Cumberland County Health Department concerning shared services for a Health Officer and an Environmental Coordinator.

SCHD will continue its agreement with the SCOEM and City of Vineland concerning response to hazardous material incidents.

SCHD has formed a task group with the SCOEM, local hospitals, County Prosecutor's Office and the local police to work on bioterrorism response.

SCHD will continue to work with local water testing laboratories in order to better serve the public and business in the community concerning water testing guidelines and requirements.

SCHD will form a partnership and work closely with Salem County Utilities Authority concerning solid waste issues.

SCHD will hold town meetings and work with local governments in communities that have special environmental concerns.

SCHD will continue to provide outreach and education on environmental issues to the effected communities. A full time Health Educator / Risk Communicator has been added to the Cumberland / Salem Health Department staff. This individual is available to all divisions to provide educational fact sheets, press releases and risk communication.

SCHD will participate in the Cumberland County, Salem County and Gloucester County Watershed management meetings.

Emerging Environmental Issues

The recent passage into law of the Private Well Testing Act will have a rather extensive impact on the operation of Salem County's Water Program. This Act serves as a mechanism to legally notify SCHD of private wells that do not pass the Safe Drinking Water Act Standards. While the Act does not officially require follow-up enforcement by the local authority, SCHD would be remiss not to respond to a notification of unsafe drinking water. It is anticipated that the additional manpower to adequately address this program will be 1 FTE. It is also anticipated that the Salem County Board of Freeholders will pass an Ordinance requiring water test results to be certified by SCHD prior to an occupancy permit being issued.

The ongoing threat of bio-terrorism puts an increased demand on personnel and training issues for first response. Because it is unknown what effect these incidents may have on the environment continued monitoring of state and federal policies will be needed. A task force of environmental, nursing, emergency response/management and law enforcement officials has been established. This team will continue to meet and drill local responses to terrorist incidents.

Salem County Health Department will continue to strengthen its infrastructure and to build partnerships with other government and non-governmental agencies in order to effectively and efficiently serve the citizens of the County.